

Introduction to adoption

for birth parents

This is the first booklet in a
series of three for birth parents
considering adoption

Funded by
crisispregnancyagency



Languages

This leaflet is available in English in print and in Latvian, Lithuanian, Mandarin Chinese, Polish and Romanian on www.treoir.ie/publications/html

Īsa informācija vecākiem, kas vēlas atdot savu bērnu adopcijā

Pradinė informacija tėvams apie kūdikio atidavimą įvaikinti

面向亲生父母的 收养介绍

Podstawowe informacje o adopcji dla rodziców biologicznych

O introducere in procesul de adoptie pentru parintii biologigi

Booklets in this series:

Introduction to adoption for birth parents

Adoption in Ireland today for birth parents considering adoption

Workbook for parents in the adoption process

To get copies of the booklets

- call Treoir on LoCall 1890 252 084
- e-mail info@treoir.ie
- download from www.treoir.ie/publications/html

Introduction

to adoption for birth parents

Who will find this booklet useful?

This booklet is for parents who are considering placing a baby for adoption. It may also be useful for professionals working with these parents.

What is adoption?

Adoption is a legal process that allows a parent (usually the mother) to place her baby with another family permanently. It ends the legal relationship between a mother, the father if he is a guardian, and their baby and marks the beginning of a new and legal relationship between a baby and her/his adoptive parents. A baby becomes a member of the adoptive family as if s/he was born into that family.

Why would I think about placing my baby for adoption?

Having thought about your different choices, you may believe that having your baby adopted will result in a better life for your baby.

Who arranges adoptions in Ireland?

Adoption is carried out through adoption agencies that are registered and approved by the Adoption Board. It is very carefully regulated. Social workers in the agencies thoroughly assess the adoptive parents, and will support you and them throughout the adoption process.

In Ireland it is illegal to place a baby

directly with another family for adoption unless it is with a close family member (a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt of the baby). In these cases the member of the family adopting the baby must apply directly to the Adoption Board for an adoption order.

Who makes the adoption legal?

The Adoption Board (Authority) is the government agency that regulates the adoption process and grants adoption orders.

Who can place a baby for adoption?

- A mother who is not married to the father of her baby, whatever her nationality, can place her baby for adoption in Ireland. The baby must be living in Ireland.
- A married mother can only place her baby for adoption if her baby is not her husband's baby.
- In exceptional circumstances other legal guardians can place babies for adoption. Check with the Adoption Board.

Has the father any rights in terms of the adoption?

All fathers, even if they are not legal guardians of their children, have a right to be told about and asked for their views on the adoption. See page 6.

If the father is a legal guardian, his consent to the adoption is needed.

How long does the whole adoption process take?

The amount of time an adoption takes depends on what issues may arise during the process. Children are usually placed with the prospective adoptive parents before they are 9 months old. Adoption orders are usually made between 6 to 14 months after the baby is placed with the new family.

Will anyone else be contacted about the adoption?

If you are over 18, usually no one else, apart from the father, needs to be contacted about the adoption. If you are under 18, you should speak to the adoption agency social worker as s/he may need to contact your parents or guardians in certain circumstances.

How much does it cost?

Adoption services in Ireland are free to everyone.

Finding out about adoption

If you are pregnant, or are about to become a dad, and are thinking about adoption you can contact one or all of the following agencies:

- A crisis pregnancy counsellor - Freetext LIST to 50444 or visit www.positiveoptions.ie for a list of free, state-funded crisis pregnancy counselling agencies. See page 9.
- An adoption agency - even if you are just **thinking** about adoption as a possibility. See page 10.
- The medical social work department in the maternity hospital or maternity unit. See your local telephone directory.
- A Health Service Executive social worker in your area. See page 10.
- The Adoption Board/Authority. See page 9.

These agencies provide information on adoption and will help you look at the whole process of adoption and your thoughts and feelings about it. Having talked through your options, you may decide that adoption is not the best choice for you. In that case the crisis pregnancy counsellor or social worker will tell you where you can get support to help you bring up your baby.

If you decide to proceed with adoption then the crisis pregnancy counsellor or social worker will refer you to a social worker from an adoption agency with whom you can discuss and explore the adoption process in more detail.

Medical care during pregnancy

It is important for you to receive medical care as early as possible in your pregnancy. If you are thinking about adoption, it is also important that you talk with the hospital social worker, midwife or doctor about what you want. They will help you plan for your stay in hospital when your baby is born.

Hospital staff are highly trained and are familiar with dealing with the wide range of circumstances that can arise during a pregnancy. If you haven't told anyone about your pregnancy the hospital staff will respect your request for confidentiality and will provide you with the care and support you need. Your wellbeing and that of your baby is their primary concern.

Before the baby is born

It is useful to be in touch with a social worker from an adoption agency as early as possible in the pregnancy. S/he will help you understand the legal side of adoption and will encourage you to explore your thoughts and feelings about adoption and the reasons why you are considering placing your baby for adoption.

The adoption agency will provide you with a full and professional adoption service if you are thinking of placing your baby

for adoption, no matter how late in your pregnancy you contact them.

What happens after your baby is born?

If you as the parent(s) are still thinking about adoption after your baby is born, the social worker from the adoption agency will visit you in hospital.

Usually the social worker arranges for your baby to be cared for in a temporary foster home while you continue to think about your possible choices. It is also possible for you to take your baby home from the hospital while you continue to explore your choices.

The decision to place a baby for adoption is for parents alone. The social worker will not influence you in any way but will support you in whatever decision you make. If you decide at this stage that adoption is not the best choice for you the social worker will tell you where you can get support to help you bring up your baby.

Initial (first) consent to the adoption

Mothers

If you decide to place your baby for adoption you will be asked to sign the initial consent form while your baby is in foster care, which allows the adoption agency to place your baby from foster care with the prospective adoptive parents.

If you wish, you can be involved in choosing the adoptive parents for your baby from families approved by the adoption agency.

Fathers who are not legal guardians

By law, the adoption agency must make every effort to contact the father and get his views on the adoption. If you, as the father are not a legal guardian and agree to the adoption, you will be asked to sign a form saying you do not object to the adoption. If you do object, you may need to get legal advice as you may have to go to court.

The Adoption Board will only agree to the placement of your baby from foster care to the prospective adopters if it is satisfied that every effort had been made to contact you, the father, and to get your views.

Fathers who are legal guardians

If you are a legal guardian you will have to

sign all the consent forms in order for the adoption to go ahead. A father becomes a legal guardian either by signing a joint guardianship consent form with the mother or by applying for and getting joint guardianship rights in the local district court. A legal guardian has a right to make decisions about important areas in the child's life.

When the baby is placed with the prospective adopters a social worker from the Adoption Board will visit the baby in her/his new home to make sure that the baby is being well cared for and has bonded with her/his new family.

Final consent to the adoption

Mothers and fathers who are guardians

When you have signed the initial consent form and your baby has settled in with the adoptive family, you will be asked to sign a final consent form to the adoption. Before you sign this form you will see an independent 'authorised person' who will make sure that you fully understand the consent you are about to give and to make sure nobody is putting any pressure on you. The authorised person is someone appointed by the Adoption Board to help you understand the whole process.

If you do not sign the final consent form,

but you have already signed the initial consent form, the adoptive parents may apply to the High Court to ask the Judge to allow them to adopt your baby without your signed, final consent. The court will decide if the adoption can be completed based on what is best for the baby. It is important to remember that it is not good for babies to be left in a situation where their futures are uncertain.

Can I change my mind?

Even if you have signed the final consent form, you can ask to have your baby back up until the point when the adoption order is made. However, the prospective adoptive parents could refuse to hand your baby back and you would then have to apply to the High Court to have your baby returned to you. The High Court will decide whether your baby stays with the adoptive parents or is returned to your care based on what is best for your baby.

Making the adoption order

The Adoption Board, if satisfied, will make the adoption order. When the adoption order is made, all legal rights and responsibilities for your baby will be transferred to the adoptive parents.

Contact after the adoption

If you want to stay in touch with your baby, the adoption agency can help with continuing contact between the adoptive family, your baby and you.

There are two choices in continuing contact:

- Open adoption – this is where birth parents and adoptive families meet face-to-face.
- Semi-open adoption – exchanging letters and photos with your baby's new family through the agency.

Any contact arrangements made between both sets of parents are not part of the legal adoption process. If anyone changes their mind about the arrangements, contact cannot be legally enforced.

You can decide to have a closed adoption. This means that the families do not stay in any kind of contact. It may be possible to arrange to have contact later on if you change your mind.

What happens after the adoption?

All adoption agencies provide a post-adoption service because they know that adoption is a life-long process. They welcome you getting in touch for

information, support and counselling at any stage after the adoption.

You can also get support and counselling from a crisis pregnancy counsellor following the adoption.

When your child reaches 18 years of age, both you and s/he can request contact with each other through the adoption agency that arranged the adoption or through the Adoption Board's Information and Tracing Service.

You can also apply to join the Adoption Board's **National Adoption Contact Preference Register**. This Register was created to make it easier for adopted people and their birth families to contact each other where this is what they both want.

Is there more information available?

You can get more detailed information on the adoption process in *Adoption in Ireland Today* which is available in English only, from:

- Treoir - LoCall 1890 252 084 or visit www.treoir.ie
- A crisis pregnancy counsellor - Freetext LIST to 50444 or visit www.positiveoptions.ie. See page 9.
- A registered adoption agency. See page 10.
- A maternity hospital social worker. See your local telephone directory.
- A Health Service Executive social worker in your area. See page 10.
- The Adoption Board/Authority. See page 9.

Useful contacts

Adoption Board/ Authority

Dublin 4
01 2309300
adoptioninfo@health.irlgov.ie
www.adoptionboard.ie
The Adoption Board is the government agency which regulates the adoption process and grants adoption orders.

Crisis pregnancy counselling agencies

Free, non-judgemental and trustworthy crisis pregnancy counselling

Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Support Service

Callsave 1850 200 600
ballinasloe cps@hse.ie

Cura

Callsave 1850 622 626
curacares@cura.ie
www.cura.ie

Dublin Well Woman Centre

Lower Liffey Street: 01 872 8051
Ballsbridge: 01 660 9860
Coolock: 01 848 4511
info@wellwomancentre.ie
www.wellwomancentre.ie/
pregnancy.html

Femplus Clinic

Dublin 15
01 821 0999
info@femplus.ie
www.femplus.ie

Irish Family Planning Association

Callsave 1850 49 50 51
post@ifpa.ie
www.ifpa.ie/eng/pregnancy-
counselling

Kerry Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service

Family Planning and Women's
Health Clinic, Tralee
066 712 5322
tfpc@eircom.net
Kerry Counselling Centre,
Tralee
066 712 2931
kerrycounsellingcentre@
hotmail.com

www.kerrycounsellingcentre.ie

South West Counselling

Centre, Killarney
064 6636416
info@southwestcounselling.ie
www.southwestcounselling.ie

Life Pregnancy Care

Callsave 1850 281 281
lifenational@eircom.net
www.life.ie
Text 086 663 8253

Mayo Pregnancy Support and Counselling Service

LoCall 1890 20 00 22
mayopsc@hse.ie

Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service

Freephone 1800 20 08 57
crisispregnancy.counselling@
hse.ie

One Family

LoCall 1890 66 22 12
info@onefamily.ie
www.onefamily.ie

Pact

Dublin 14
Callsave 1850 67 33 33
info@pact.ie
www.pact.ie

Sexual Health Centre, Cork

021 427 6676
info@sexualhealthcentre.com
www.sexualhealthcentre.com

West Cork Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service

LoCall 1890 252 359
wccss@eircom.net

Youth Health Service, Cork

021 422 0490/1
yhs@hse.ie

Registered adoption agencies

Professional agencies registered by the Adoption Board to arrange adoptions

Cúnamh

Dublin 2
01 677 9664
info@cunamh.com
www.cunamh.com

Pact

Dublin 14
Callsave 1850 67 33 33
info@pact.ie
www.pact.ie

St Catherine's Adoption Society

Co Clare
065 6828 178
info@clarecare.ie
www.clarecare.ie/adoption.html

St Mura's Adoption Society

Co Donegal
074 9122 047
stmuras@eircom.net

Health Service Executive Adoption Services

Local adoption offices

Website: http://www.hse.ie/eng/Find_a_service/Children_and_Family_Services/Adoption_and_Tracing/

Cork

021 4858 650

Donegal

074 9122 047

Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow

01 8387 122

Galway

091 548 430

Kerry

066 719 5628

Laois, Offaly

057 9370 700

Limerick, Clare,

061 206 820

Longford

043 3350 783

Louth, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan

041 983 2963

Mayo

094 904 2511
Roscommon
090 6637 578

Sligo, Leitrim

071 9136 550

Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary

051 8600 48

Westmeath

043 3350 584

Information for unmarried parents who are keeping their children

Treoir

The National Information Service for parents who are not married to each other

LoCall 1890 252 084

info@treoir.ie

www.treoir.ie

Produced by representatives of

Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Support Service, Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital, Cúnamh, Health Service Executive, Regional Adoption Service North East, Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Support Service, National Maternity Hospital, Pact, Rotunda Hospital, Treoir and University Hospital Galway.

Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, no responsibility can be accepted by the network of organisations that produced this booklet for any error or omission.

There is no substitute for seeking information directly from the Adoption Board or an adoption agency. The information in this booklet is not to be considered legal advice.

Funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is a statutory body set up to formulate and implement a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland. The Agency's second Strategy, *Leading an integrated approach to reducing crisis pregnancy 2007-2011* outlines seven strategic priorities.

This resource has been funded as part of the Agency's fifth priority, which aims to 'improve the range and nature of supports central to making continuation of pregnancy more attractive and ensure that women, their partners and families are fully informed about these supports.' For further information on the Agency, visit www.crisispregnancy.ie.

The opinions and views outlined in this document are not necessarily the opinions and views of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

 **Coimre Women & Infants University Hospital**
Coimre na Mairbh & na Mairbhí *Coimre na Mairbh*
Hospital for Women & Infants



**National
Maternity
Hospital**

Cúnamh 

Pact 
care partners & ushers

**The Rotunda
Hospital**
Dublin


Teochtairmhu na Spriúis Níste
Health Service Executive

The National Federation of Services for
Unmarried Parents and their Children


Treoir